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The California State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held an open meeting in east Los Angeles in June 1967, to collect information about civil rights problems in the Mexican American community. The meeting dealt particularly with problems in education. Specific problems presented by parents, students, and community leaders centered on the lack of effective communication between the school system and its minority constituency, and included parental involvement, indifference of school personnel, inadequacy of curriculum, insufficiency of special program funding, and recency of problem recognition. Recommendations made by the Committee to both Federal and State governments included: (1) adequate appropriations to continue, expand, and initiate new programs designed to aid Mexican Americans; (2) teacher-training programs designed to encourage involvement by bilingual and Mexican American teachers; (3) investigations of standardized testing instruments for cultural bias and development of bilingual and bicultural tests, and (4) expansion of the curriculum to include bilingual and bicultural materials that relate to the minority communities. (DK)

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A Report of the
California State Advisory Committee
to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights

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EDUCATION AND THE MEXICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A Report of an Open Meeting

by the California State Advisory Committee

to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

April 1968

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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PREFACE

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

The United States Commission on Civil Rights is an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957. By the terms of that Act, as amended by the Civil Rights Acts of 1960 and 1964, the Commission is charged with the following duties: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting denials of the equal protection of the law; and investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

THE STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 as amended. The Committees are made up of knowledgeable persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concering their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission upon matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters which the State Committee has studied; assist the Commission in matters which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference which the Commission may hold within the State.

This report was submitted to the United States Commission on Civil Rights by the California State Advisory Committee. The conclusions and recommendations are based upon the Advisory Committee's evaluation of information received at two days of meetings held in East Los Angeles on June 8 and 9, 1967. This report has been received by the Commission and will be considered by it in making its report and recommendations to the President and the Congress.

INTRODUCTION

The California State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights conducted a 2-day meeting at La Casa del Mexicano in East Los Angeles in June 1967 to collect information about civil rights problems in the Mexican American community.

More than 40 persons who live and work in the barrio--the Mexican American section--of East Los Angeles expressed their views about the opportunities open to them in employment and education. Representatives of public and private agencies described their existing programs and future plans.

The information gathered during those two days, the discouragement and hopelessness in the face of constant struggles with poverty and discrimination disclosed by speaker after speaker, vividly portrayed to the Committee the difficulties the Mexican American faces in a Los Angeles barrio.

This report concentrates on the issue of education which recently has been the cause of major disruptions in the East Los Angeles schools and community. In early March 1968, thousands of students staged walkouts in five predominantly Mexican American Eastside schools; student-police clashes, arrests, mass demonstrations and sit-ins followed.

The conditions of a year ago summarized here clearly have not been resolved and perhaps have been compounded. But it is hoped that this report will increase public awareness and understanding, and in turn, result in constructive action at the Federal, State, and local levels to deal effectively and promptly with the problems in the barrio schools.

EDUCATION AND THE MEXICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

OVERVIEW

"Civil rights," as generally defined and interpreted in the United States, is a phrase of vague implications to the Mexican American who is aware that the Nation offers less of its prosperity to him than it does to others. But he is inclined to blame himself for any failure to gain an equal share of that prosperity.

His experience in this country does not provide the basis for the belief that he can attain first-class citizenship. His tradition stresses one's intrinsic worth, as opposed to the esteem one must fight to obtain from others.

This attitude, however, does not change the reality. There are 5,000,000 Mexican Americans in the Southwest who have problems with education and employment, more serious in some cases than those suffered by Negroes. It is evident that various forms of discrimination are major causes of these problems.

In recent years, many Mexican Americans have become more vocal in defining the problems and demanding that society act responsibly toward all its citizens. Understandably, much of the current discussion about Mexican American problems emanates from metropolitan Los Angeles where the largest concentration of Mexican Americans within the United States resides.

The 1960 census reported that more than 6,000,000 persons lived in Los Angeles County and at that time the Spanish surname population was the larges minority group with about 10 percent of the total. In East Los Angeles, the

Spanish surname population was 70,802 or 67.1 percent. This group has continued to grow as shown by the Special Census in 1965: In East Los Angeles 76 of every 100 residents in 1965 were Mexican American. The Mexican American population of East Los Angeles advanced by 6 percent between 1960 and 1965, while the area's total population declined by 8 percent.

Approximately one-fourth to one-third of the total population is Mexican American in 11 areas outside East Los Angeles: San Fernando, Pacoima, Wilmington, University, Wholesale, Elysian Park, Mount Washington, La Puente, Pico Rivera, Montebello, and Terminal Island. Seven of these areas are close to the East Los Angeles region. In spite of these concentrations, the Mexican American population is widely distributed throughout the county; in 23 areas surveyed in the county, the Spanish surname population accounts for 10 to 20 percent of the total. In 29 additional areas it is 5 to 9 percent of the total. There is no area from which Spanish surname people are completely absent and only 12 areas where they account for less than 2 percent of the total.

According to the 1960 census, the Spanish surname population ranked below the county averages in many socioeconomic characteristics, such as income, employment, housing, and education. Median family income was $5,762 as compared to $7,287 for other whites. Twenty-five percent of all families had an annual income below $4,000; slightly less than 10 percent had incomes below $2,000 a year. The 1965 unemployment rate for males was 7.6 percent, about 2 percentage points higher than the county average. Fewer than half of all Spanish surname families owned their own homes in 1960. Median value of these owner-occupied homes was $13,000, $2,900 below the county average of $15,900.

More than half, 54.6 percent, of all units occupied by Spanish surname families and individuals were built before 1950 and one-fifth were classified as dilapidated or deteriorated.

The 1960 census also reported comparative scholastic achievement for persons over 25 years old. In California, the median school years completed for Spanish surname persons was 8.6; the comparative figure for Anglo Americans was 12.1 an for nonwhites, 10.5.

According to California's first public school racial census, released in March 1967 by the State Department of Education, 57 percent of the Spanish surname students in districts with more than 50,000 enrollment attended "minority schools." The Department defined a minority school as one which fails to come within 15 percent of matching the proportion of minority students in the school district as a whole. For example, if a school district has a total minority student enrollment of 35 percent, a school in that district with more than 50 percent minority students would be considered a "minority school."

In East Los Angeles where more than 76 percent of the population is Mexican American, approximately 7 percent, according to the 1960 census, had no schooling at all and less than 9 percent had completed even one year of college.

According to a 1965-66 survey undertaken by the Los Angeles City School System, the two high schools with the highest dropout rates were the predominantly Mexican American schools, Garfield, where the dropout rate was 53.8 percent, and Roosevelt, with a 47.5 percent dropout rate. In contrast, two Westside schools, Palisades and Monroe, had dropout rates of 3.1 percent and 2.6 percent respectively.

Mexican American enrollment in California colleges is extremely low. At the University of California at Los Angeles there were fewer Mexican Americans enrolled in 1967--less than 70--than there were 10 years before despite the huge enrollment increase. At the University of California at Berkeley there were approximately 70 Mexican American students in a student body of more than 25,000. Even at California State College at Los Angeles, in the heart of the Nation's largest Mexican American community, there were only 200 Spanish-speaking students out of a student population of 22,000. While Mexican American students comprise 13.6 percent of California's public school population, they comprise less than one percent of its college student population.

EDUCATION PROBLEMS

In the open meeting, parents, students, and school administrators agreed that public education for Mexican Americans was inadequate and frequently ineffective. Some speakers suggested that efforts were being made to identify and alleviate the problems, while others expressed doubts that change was being effected. As the meeting progressed a series of major problems emerged, highlighted by examples of individuals' experiences with the schools.

Administrators

Alleged discrimination by administrators, policy makers, and teachers against Mexican Americans was a major concern of many of the participants. Alfred Valdez, a veteran counselor for the county of Los Angeles, charged that to school administrators: "Education as an institution is the maintenance of the status quo... . /It/ does not allow for cultural pluralism. Mexican American students are told, 'We are all Americans.' And this is one of their /Mexican Americans'/ biggest complaints. While their kids are in school, they are told they are Americans and yet they are treated as Mexicans."

According to Ralph Cuaron, acting executive director of the East Los Angeles Improvement Council, "Lack of faith in educational programs on the part of the people is growing. For three years we have been trying to put forth a program with the Housing and Urban Development /Department/ of the Federal Government, one that would unite the educational system, the Board of Education, and all other federally financed programs into a meaningful and coordinated program of effort by all institutions to build up the community. We have got no results; the greatest resistance has been by the institutions themselves. Educators are an entity unto themselves who seek

solutions to the problems of education outside of the community... . /We/ find it so difficult to tell sociologists, teachers, administrators, and so forth, why they should pull together, why they should make Federal programs unite Negro and Mexican, Mexican and white."

Cuaron concluded that the "little people," the Mexican American, the Negro, and the poor, are fearful that what little they have will be taken away. Instead of being helped by the Government and by the large corporations--the power structure--they will be hurt. Their home is taken away by eminent domain laws with the promise that low income housing will be built and instead corporations build luxury housing. And the Board of Education is part of this system, Cuaron charged.

Diego Perez, a member of the American GI Forum, a Mexican American veterans' organization, and a member of the Advisory Committee of the Education Resources Information Service, expressed dismay at the indifference of school administrators and policy makers: "What is the Government doing for us? Why can't they do anything for us? Are they afraid? Are their hands tied? Or aren't we worthy of it?" He charged that on the Westside, 12 schools are on half-session, but on the predominantly Mexican American Eastside, 33 schools are on half-session.

Irene Tovar, commissioner of compensatory education, said: "As I was coming here I was thinking about the Board /of Education/ and I thought of a particular member...who made it very terribly suspicious if you were bilingual, and in his presentations he used to make fun of the other candidate who was attempting to get into the Board because he was bilingual. And if at that top level we're dealing with this sort of thing, I wonder what can I expect from anybody down the ladder."

Teachers

Parents, community members, and students felt that many teachers and principals obstructed effective education. It was the teacher who dealt with the child everyday and influenced his attitudes toward learning, parents agreed, yet, they pointed out, many of the predominantly Mexican American schools in the barrio had teachers and administrators who were rejected by other schools.

Concerned about the caliber of teachers in the barrio, Gerardo Martinez, assistant director of the Joint Venture Project, said "What worries us most is that these problems /of poor teachers/ do not occur in some other areas of Los Angeles. This only occurs in the Mexican American areas because it's very easy for a father in West Los Angeles to pick up the phone and call the principal and say that such and such a teacher is not good. That teacher will be removed, but the teacher will go to a Mexican American area where no-one will ever complain again, and he will keep on doing the same thing he was doing in other schools. We feel that we are getting second-rate teachers in all the Mexican American areas, and, yet, these teachers always complain that it is the lack of interest, or ability, to get the children to learn."

A teacher in the Los Angeles city schools, Ben Gomez, felt that many teachers lacked understanding of and empathy with their Mexican American students: "The attitudes of many of my colleagues are negative toward the Mexican American. I have heard some remarks in the teachers' room made like, 'I have never had a Mexican who could think for himself.' I have heard others say, 'These Mexican kids, why do they have to be here?'"

A recent graduate of an East Los Angeles high school, David Sanchez, expressed distrust for both teachers and counselors. He pointed out that

the new teacher fresh out of college cannot understand or cope with the problems he must confront. His solution is to fail the whole class labeling them inferior. However, the administrator tells him, "You can't have them here forever. Just give them D's and rush them through." Mr. Sanchez claimed that the counselors "are one of the students' biggest enemies." They tend to push Mexican American students toward shop courses. "If you have ever noticed at Lincoln, at Garfield, and at Roosevelt, /East Los Angeles high schools/ you will find the nicest shop facilities that exist in the city," Sanchez said.

Mr. Valdez also commented on the counseling and guidance programs of the Los Angeles public schools: "The counselor is untrained in the area of understanding the Mexican American. The counselor workload is very high. The system has also brought back many Mexican Americans who have left the community and have no awareness of what is going on any longer. Once they achieve a middle-class status, there is little they know about our communities."

Mike de Anda, chairman of the East Los Angeles Town Meeting, related the experience of a Mexican American girl at Garfield High School: "She explained to us that she went for an interview with her counselor, and her counselor said, 'What are you going to be, honey?' And she said, 'I'm going to be a nurse.' And he said 'Well, that's fine. What are you taking up?' And she said, 'Home Economics.' You can never be a nurse with home economics! And the counselor said, 'Fine. Keep up the good work.' This man should have enough sense to know that he should have told this girl, 'No, wait a minute. You can't do it this way.' This is the problem that I say is discrimination."

In response to some of these charges regarding teachers in the East Los Angeles schools, Dr. Herbert Cadwell, assistant superintendent in East

Area-Elementary said: "I do not accept categorically the charges that have been made. I would say to any parent here or at any time, if they, as an individual parent, are concerned about the treatment of their child in the school, or the treatment of themselves, the area office is open to them, certainly, for discussion and counseling. I hope they will turn first to their local administrator for whatever discussion is appropriate. No, I can't--I simply cannot accept any charge that our teachers are less able. There is certainly no foundation or fact for a statement such as the poor teacher is sent over to the Eastside and dumped there. This is completely false."

In some cases, however, parents expressed doubt that local administrators were willing to discuss their children's problems. Monica Jimenez told the Committee the problems she had in preventing her child's suspension from school: "They /the school authorities/ didn't tell me that I had any choice in the matter, but to just take my boy home. After taking my boy to the P.T.A. Child Guidance Clinic where he was given a clean bill of health and the psychologist told me that he had found him normal, the principal insisted that my son is psychotic and mentally ill. I have stated to her that he is prejudiced; she has humiliated me and my son. She has swatted my son and told him that if he thinks he is going to make trouble for her school he is mistaken. When they asked me to take my son from school I felt that I had no other choice, and the principal claimed that I agreed to take him out. When I realized that the principal had not officially suspended my boy, I called her and asked her to write a suspension, an official suspension, and she said she would take my son back. The school was so unconcerned about my son, that I'm sure that I would have

never received a call from them if I hadn't called them inquiring about the suspension notice." When one of the Committee members asked whether she felt this situation occurred because she was a Mexican American, Mrs. Jimenez answered,"I'm sure that principals and staff people do not get away with these kinds of things on the Westside of town which is predominantly Anglo."

Among the participants who commented on the lack of Mexican American teachers, Armando Rodriguez, then representing the California State Department's Bureau of Intergroup Relations, noted: "There is definitely a lack of minority employees in our school system, nowhere near the proportion of the population as a whole. Now, the age-old cry by those who do the hiring is that they are not available, or they are not qualified--whatever that means.

"But the schools, as a whole, are not employing minority educators, nor are they found in positions of administration nor in positions where policies are made. The Mexican Americans have less than 2 percent of the teacher population. The Orientals have less than 2 percent of the teacher population, and this goes way down when you look at it in terms of administration," said Rodriguez, now Chief of the Mexican American Unit, United States Office of Education.

Mr. Gomez felt that the few Mexican Americans who did teach were exploited by the school system. Some were appointed on an informal basis to coordinate the work of Spanish-speaking students. Furthermore, Mexican American teachers were not given credit for their bilingual abilities, nor were they provided adequate training to make maximum utilization of their bicultural background, Gomez asserted.

School Curriculum

Many speakers felt that some of the problems encountered by Mexican American students would be alleviated if the school program were more relevant. Textbooks which gave an inadequate and even biased view of Mexican Americans and Mexican history, placement of Mexican Americans in non-academic or shop courses, failure to consider both the values as well as the handicaps of bi-lingualism, and placement of an inordinate number of Mexican American students in mentally retarded classes were presented as examples of discrimination against Mexican American children.

Dr. Miguel Montes, member of the State Board of Education, stated that the Board's latest textbook acquisition, Land of the Free, "...has done somewhat of an adequate job for the Negro minority, but very little is said about the Mexican American. ...We must keep in mind that it is not only a Negro problem in this country but a problem of the Mexican American as well."

Rosalinda Mendez, a graduate of an East Los Angeles high school, felt that the school curriculum was primarily responsible for the failure of many Mexican American students to complete school: "From the time we first begin attending school, we hear about how great and wonderful our United States is, about our democratic American heritage, but little about our splendid and magnificient Mexican heritage and culture. What little we do learn about Mexicans is how they mercilessly slaughtered the brave Texans at the Alamo, but we never hear about the child heroes of Mexico who courageously threw themselves from the heights of Chapultepec rather than allow themselves and their flag to be captured by the attacking Americans. ...We look for others like ourselves in these history books, for something to be proud of for being

a Mexican, and all we see in books, magazines, films, and T.V. shows are stereotypes of a dark, dirty, smelly man with a tequila bottle in one hand, a dripping taco in the other, a serape wrapped around him, and a big sombrero. But we are not the dirty, stinking wino that the Anglo world would like to point out as a Mexican...We begin to think that maybe the Anglo teacher is right, that maybe we are inferior, that we do not belong in this world, that, as some teachers actually tell students to their faces, we should go back to Mexico and quit causing problems for America."

Another student, Francisco Gonzales, said that he is one of the non-English-speaking students and has been in Los Angeles for two years. He is still unable to speak English. Speaking in Spanish, he told the Committee: "I try as hard as I can to learn English and to improve myself as much as I can. However, one of the reasons I am not able to do as well as I perhaps should, is that the teachers themselves do not speak both English and Spanish. Therefore, there is again a lack of communication, and it is harder for me to learn English. Ninty percent of the students in the program are Mexican who speak no English and it seems that there should be somebody that could at least communicate with them."

Counseling

The counseling and guidance services were related to the lower level of education received by Mexican American children, according to several participants. The State Department of Education's racial survey showed that Mexican American students were heavily represented in special education classes, including classes for the mentally retarded and the emotionally disturbed.

Ray Villa, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in Orange County, claimed that the Mexican American child who cannot communicate in English is "buried" in mentally retarded classes and forgotten. Parents may protest that their child is not mentally retarded, but the school psychologist, or guidance officers will say that "he is, and therefore, he remains."

Wilson Riles, Director of Compensatory Education for the State Department of Education, said that the Department was collecting data to evaluate the reasons why so many Mexican Americans were in special classes. He said that the Department suspects that cultural differences might be interpreted as handicaps even though they certainly are not actual deficiencies. "So, we are watching. You see, it's one thing when you tell a child that he is handicapped. You act as if he is deficient, and be believes it; he acts like, and indeed becomes deficient."

Dr. Henry Johnson, at that time a testing officer at California State College in Long Beach, commented that test results, when misinterpreted by teachers and counselors, could permanently damage a child's educational opportunities. "Anytim you take a test, the people who are giving the test assume that the candidate has equal opportunity to the materials covered in the test."

Dr. Johnson explained that the misuse of these instruments "...could hurt a youngster, damage him for the rest of his life, and /State/ legislation does not...make it mandatory that teachers...should be aware and understand the instruments that could cause a great deal of harm to our children."

Dr. Elnora Schmadel, a psychologist and consultant to local school systems, reported that she had seen teachers refer students to mentally retarded classes because the teachers lacked an understanding of Spanish-speaking youngsters. After the referrals were made and the youngsters were tested, their scores were obviously low and substantiated the teacher's initial judgment.

According to David Sanchez, counselors show little interest in the Mexican American student and try to dispose of him without really meeting his needs: "When a kid needs a little bread, here is what they do. They say, 'Well, we'll take half your classes away and turn you out with a cheap little job.' And in these cheap little jobs, the kids find a little interest in money and lose interest in school and education."

The Committee felt that the anxieties and frustrations of the students have intensified as the number of Mexican Americans drop out of school. The students' comments in particular showed an urgent need for attention to the problems of guidance and counselirg.

Community Participation

Communication links between parents and the schools appeared poor, and in some cases, nonexistent. Stuart Stengel, assistant superintendent of the East District, acknowledged that parents are fearful "... of coming to school, and it's a very legitimate position and we certainly recognize it." However, the open meeting demonstrated the fact that this community really cares, Stengel said.

"It is very tragic to find out that people who are educated are so afraid of people," Miss Tovar added. "I have constantly been involved in situations where parent involvement is actually more or less a frightful thing to the

educator and instead of trying to close the gap between the school and the parents, there seems to be almost a perpetuation of that fear of the parent." She said the charge that parents lack interest in the school is an excuse teachers use to avoid dealing with parents.

Dr. Elnora Schmadel suggested that the values learned by a Mexican American child at home bore no relationship to what he was taught in school. Furthermore, when Mexican American parents come to the school concerned about their child's education, they are told, "You may not talk to me. You may not reach me. You may not be critical of a program which I think is advantageous to you." Dr. Schmadel explained that she had worked with parent groups concerned about their failure to communicate with school administrators. "The personal hurt was so great that they had to build up a real trust in the Anglo counterpart before they could communicate some of the very basic problems which were an everyday part of their life."

Many parents and community leaders attributed the failure of school-community cooperation to the mistaken belief by the school system that Mexican American parents were unconcerned about their children's future and education.

Frank Serrano, a teacher in an experimental reading project at the Malabar Street School, said: "We have heard many comments about the Mexican American parents, that they are not interested in the education of their children. We have heard that they are lazy, that we cannot communicate with them. But let me be as emphatic as I may--without taking my shoe off and pounding it on the table--that the Mexican American parents are very much concerned with the education of their children."

EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

The Committee invited several people to discuss promising education programs for Mexican American children. Participants discussed the progress of existing programs as well as plans and recommendations for the future. It was evident that there is a scarcity of effective bilingual programs in Los Angeles County and that the development of new programs is hampered by lack of funds and lack of commitment by the policy makers. According to Miss Tovar, a long list of recommendations was presented to the Los Angeles Board of Education in 1963. Few of those recommendations were accepted and even fewer reached the community.

Federal Plans and Programs

Louis Hausman, Assistant to the U.S. Commissioner of Education, outlined some of the Federal programs in the Southwest which directly or indirectly affect the education of Mexican Americans. The three major sources of Federal support are Titles I and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Regional Laboratory program. Mr. Hausman mentioned that it is difficult to ascertain which parts of these funds are specifically for Mexican Americans since, first, the funds are allocated to the States which in turn distribute money locally, and secondly, the Federal Government cannot dictate the priorities for the use of funds by school districts. "The best that the Federal Government can do--and we think it's a great deal--is to make funds available to stimulate diversity."

One example of the use of Title I funds is the Malabar School Project which involves parents in the classroom as well as in meetings after school. Another Title I project, at the Whittier school, according to the project's

director, Henry Ramirez, stimulates and develops achievement on the part of potential dropouts. The crucial factor in this program is the development of leadership within the student peer group. Combatting years of indifference by the schools, Mr. Ramirez said, these students develop pride in themselves and their culture and in turn exert pressure on other students to become involved.

Mr. Hausman did not describe specific projects funded for East Los Angeles by the other two major sources, but he emphasized that local school systems could apply directly to the Commissioner of Education for Title III funds or to the regional laboratories for materials and assistance. Acknowledging that there were few programs available for community groups since all funding went to State departments or school systems, he expressed hope that private organizations would complement Federal programs by considering projects sponsored by community groups.

Mr. Rodriguez felt that the scarcity of Federal programs for Mexican Americans was due to the fact that: "Most of the programs coming from Washington, that I've been able to observe, are oriented to the East...And until we get complete understanding of the needs of this area in the major agencies in Washington, we really are not going to be able to fully utilize the funds and the programs that are being made available."

Miss Tovar mentioned the effectiveness of the Head Start programs for Mexican Americans but was distressed by the lack of cooperation on the part of the school system in implementing this program.

State Plans and Programs

Several speakers discussed the concern and programs of the State Department of Education for Mexican American students.

On one major issue, compensatory education, for example, State representatives emphasized that such programs should not be offered in isolation.

Mr. Rodriguez warned: "As long as we have isolated communities--ghettos, barrios--we are not really going to provide these children with the opportunity of being culturally enriched or an opportunity to enrich others with a culture, an opportunity to deal with each other in terms of being successful in the total community. And when we are talking about a community, we are not talking just about East Los Angeles; we are talking about a metropolitan community."

A function of the California State Department's Bureau of Intergroup Relations, Mr. Rodriguez pointed out, is to make both the Anglo and minority communities aware of the need to eliminate isolated schools. The racial and ethnic census of schools conducted by the State was a first step in the education process by pointing out where isolation paralleled children's underachievement. The State, explained Mr. Riles, has "never approved of a project--not one--which contemplates the segregation of Mexican American students for the entire school day in order to provide specialized programs."

Mr. Riles described the program's philosophy: "Equal educational opportunity does not mean the same program for every child, but a program that will give each child an equal chance to succeed to the maximum extent of his potential--regardless of his economic, ethnic, social, or cultural background." With this philosophy in mind, the State has sponsored many programs specifically to help Spanish-speaking children learn English more rapidly while enhancing their facility in Spanish and pride in their Spanish heritage, he added.

Improvement of school and community relations is another major State activity. School districts are encouraged to employ neighborhood parents as teachers' aides, to conduct parent education meetings, and to utilize bilingual staff as community coordinators. Despite the progress of some compensatory programs, Riles noted: "We have barely scratched the surface. The need is so much greater than the funds and resources available."

Mr. Rodriguez agreed, adding that the lower achievement of barrio students persisted despite the Federal and State enrichment and compensatory programs, because they are... "only a band-aid process. We need to start developing an overall comprehensive program to meet the problems."

Local Plans and Programs

Representatives from several Los Angeles County school systems discussed present programs and future plans. Arnold Rodriguez, Director of Community Relations for Los Angeles City Schools, pointed out, "We would be the first to stress that not enough is being done...The problems are staggering." Unfortunately, he added, education, and specifically the educational needs of minorities, has not received high priority, locally or federally. He feared that many of the special programs for Mexican Americans would be cut back or eliminated, since funds for these programs were not provided in the ordinary budget. If Federal funding were cancelled, many existing programs would be eliminated, he said.

The Los Angeles City school system has attempted to place Mexican American teachers in schools where they can use their bilingual abilities. Of the 205 Spanish surname teachers in the elementary school system, 105 are assigned to East Los Angeles schools.

A community relations office serves as a connecting link between the community and the school and frequently deals with individual complaints. For example, when Mexican American parents complained that the director of the non-English-speaking program could not speak Spanish, a Spanish-speaking teacher was assigned to the office.

Furthermore, the school system has initiated a voluntary in-service human relations program for teachers and administrators with a majority of the participants coming from East Los Angeles.

The representatives of the school district concluded that they are committed to providing equal educational opportunity to all students. They said the district didn't know all the answers, but it was making progress, less rapid progress, they admitted, than either the community or the school staff would like.

SUMMARY

During the open meeting, the Committee heard many parents, students, and community leaders complain about the inadequacies of the public schools.

Lack of knowledge and concern about the Mexican American stifled effective communication between the school system and its minority constituency, the Committee learned.

Administrators claimed that parents do not care and parents claimed that they are not properly informed or involved. In spite of some recent progress, there are still schools that do not provide staff capable of communicating with non-English-speaking parents. Because of this, communication between parents and schools is minimal.

Community leaders stressed the fact that students were frustrated by the apparent indifference of administrators and teachers. Parents claimed that the schools were staffed by poorly qualified teachers who rejected and made no effort to understand their children.

The curriculum was considered inadequate for job preparation and irrelevant to the needs of the students. It was charged that disproportionate numbers of Mexican Americans are placed in classes for the mentally retarded because they could not cope with the placement tests given in English; textbooks fail to represent the positive contributions Spanish surname citizens have made to our society. Frustrated and misunderstood, Mexican American children are rushed through, pushed out, or drop out.

With the exception of Head Start all special programs operating to assist the Mexican American are directly controlled by the school system. Since most of these programs such as English as a Second Language and New

Horizons use Federal and State funds rather than general operating funds, their expansion and continuity depend on efforts or funding outside the school system. In other words, the local school system makes no plans to support these special programs should outside funding fail, nor are any efforts made beyond minimal federally funded demonstration programs. Few as they are, the most encouraging programs are those which encourage parent and student participation in planning and implementation.

The Committee was told that the education problems of Mexican Americans and their solutions have only recently been of concern to school policy makers and administrators. In fact, the parents and community leaders have only recently recognized that the public schools are failing to provide adequate education for the Mexican American child.

Marcus de Leon, president of the Association of Mexican American Educators, summarized the position of Mexican American teachers and parents: "We can no longer stand by and accept the point of view that considers this population as culturally deprived or disadvantaged simply because its value system and language are different."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights are based on the findings in this report as well as additional information gathered by Committee members subsequent to the open meeting.

The recent passage of the Bilingual Education Act--Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1967--has added a new dimension to the opportunities of the Mexican American community in the area of bilingual, bicultural education. Bilingual education measures have also been enacted in California. These developments call for an in-depth reconsideration of the role of the school system, the parent, the community, and the student in the educational process of bilingual, bicultural students, and the development and implementation of new and comprehensive programs.

Although the recommendations are directed to the Federal Government, the Committee feels that a major responsibility for alleviating many of the legitimate problems described in this report rests fundamentally with the citizens and school and government officials of the State of California and especially with those of the County of Los Angeles. Therefore, the Committee has included Suggestions for Action for consideration by State and local authorities.

The California State Advisory Committee recommends that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights:

1. Recommend to the President and the Congress that adequate appropriations under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary

Education Amendments of 1967 be provided for programs to study the implications of the bilingual, bicultural approach to education methods and techniques.

a) That the results of such research be made immediately available to policy makers at the Federal, State, and local levels so that they will be in a better position to understand the special needs of Mexican Americans.

b) That the implications of such a study be incorporated into federally sponsored pre-service and in-service training programs for teachers and counselors.

c) That the developments of curriculum materials based on the bilingual concept be supported with Federal funds.

2. Recommend to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education:

a) That existing programs be monitored to assure that they are:

1) meaningfully combating the problems;

2) reaching the designated target group; and

3) involving the community in decision-making on educational policy.

b) That federally sponsored teacher-training programs encourage the recruitment of Mexican Americans by offering incentives for bilingual abilities.

c) That an education program for administrators, teachers, and community members be developed to show the damage resulting from isolated education and the advantages for all groups of integrated education.

d) That national, standardized testing instruments be re-examined for cultural bias and that the development of bilingual, bicultural tests be sponsored by Federal contract.

e) That current vocational education programs re-evaluate their curricula and methods to meet the special needs of Mexican Americans, especially the potential dropouts.

f) That the U.S. Office of Education, Mexican American Unit, and the regional laboratories in the Southwest be given the authority and funds to explore and develop the above recommendations.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STATE AND LOCAL ACTION

The California State Advisory Committee offers the following suggestions for the consideration of State and local authorities:

1. Acquire textbooks and supplementary materials which portray a positive and truthful image of the Mexican American, his history, and his contributions to American culture.
2. Increase the number of bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and encourage the involvement of both Mexican Americans and Anglos in the bilingual efforts.
3. Re-evaluate the qualification and certification requirements at the State and local levels, and the State universities and colleges, and include the following provisions:
   a) A complete re-evaluation of teacher preparation should be made with special emphasis on preparation for teaching in disadvantaged areas.
   b) Make incentives available to encourage more Mexican Americans to complete higher education and join the teaching profession.
   c) Grant credits toward certification for bilingual abilities and salary incentives for all teachers with bilingual ability.
   d) Make bilingual ability a mandatory requirement for teachers and counselors working in schools with a large bilingual and non-English-speaking student body.
4. Because of the widespread concern in Southern California with the indiscriminate placement of Mexican American children in educable mentally retarded classes, the Advisory Committee feels that this

valid concern must be dealt with and recommends that there be a re-evaluation of the testing instruments and the placement procedures of students in the special education and the educable mentally retarded classes. The content and methods used in these classes should also be re-evaluated.

5. Seek adequate funds from the California Legislature to finance the recently enacted bilingual bill, including a study of its impact to determine whether local school districts are improving their ability to teach Spanish-speaking students.

6. Establish at the State level an analytical apparatus to explore the cultural isolation of the Mexican American and the implications of this isolation for his survival in the education system. (This activity might be related to the State's annual racial census data currently being collected.)

7. The Committee, recognizing that the schools are not relating to the communities which they are supposed to serve, recommends that joint planning seminars and community meetings be instituted to bridge the gap between the schools and the community. Such seminars would enable parents and community residents to discuss education problems and concerns with school personnel and would encourage communication and combat the cultural isolation of the Mexican American in the barrio.

8. Stimulate greater parent and community participation through such devices as para-professionals, teachers' aides, adult education programs, and community meetings. Each school should

form a Community Advisory Committee which would represent the total ethnic and socioeconomic composition of the student body. In schools with Spanish-speaking students, the Community Advisory Committee should have bilingual representation.

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